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WILD WOMEN

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(Sophomore)

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"WILD WOMEN"

"WILD WOMEN"

The Romance of a Flapper

BY

MISS JANET LEE

(SOPHOMORE)

WITH 25 ILLUSTRATIONS

NICHOLAS L. BROWN

NEW YORK MCMXXII

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TO THE READER

A sprightly romance of a budding flapper (with an imagination) that prompted the English instructress to take a hand in the young lady's family affairs and so involve the family in a wild-goose chase that brought about a surprising climax to a love affair—of the girl's older sister.

"WILD WOMEN"

THE ROMANCE OF A FLAPPER

I

TOOTS DIPS INTO LOVE

What is Love?

What is love?

Having found out at last the True Answer to this Question that has been puzzling Wise Men and Poets, etc., for Ages, I will make it the subject of today's theme.

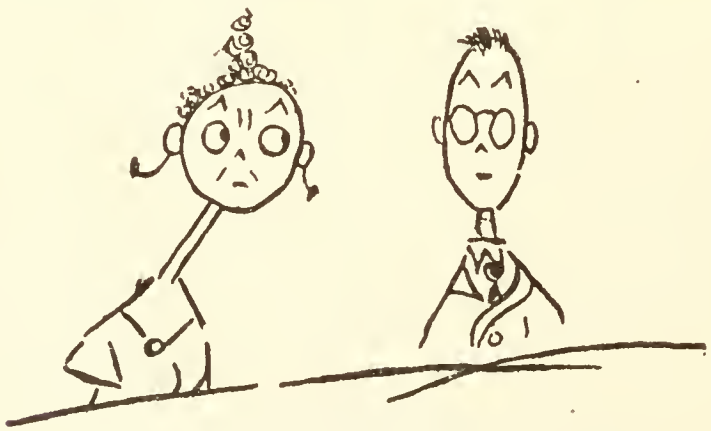
Having consulted the Dictionary for the definition of Love, and finding even that most estimable source of Wisdom all wrong, I went in search of the Truth among the people, so to speak. To each one that I met, I put the same question: "Love—what is it?"

I asked mother first. We were at the supper-table as usual and, as usual, mother persisted in misunderstanding me.

"Love?" she said, growing very dignified at once, "Love is all absolute Nonsense, and I trust a daughter of mine has Common Sense enough to be above such silliness."

"But, that's not the definition given in the Dictionary," argued I.

And Dad chuckled.



Mother floored him with a look.

Mother floored him with a look, then said sarcastically:

"Well, if you want my definition for Love, I'd say it's a crazy idea that a young girl is apt to get into her head, that her own home does not offer excitement enough for her and causes her to let some silly young man convince her that darning his socks for him is the most exciting thing in the world."

And Dad disappeared behind the evening paper with a grunt, as usual after being sat upon.

I then turned to Sister May—hoping for once she would forget that superior way she has of hiding her Ignorance under a cloak of haughty silence, but, as usual, she used me as a springing-board to jump on Mr. Jack.

Mr. Jack is brother Bill's chum and Fraternity Brother. He is a Senior in the University here. He is very Handsome—he would make a wonderful Leading Man on The Stage. Some day I shall write a play for him and convince him that I am NOT the Mere Child he thinks me. Mr. Jack doesn't

know anyone else on Earth when sister May is around—but some people are blind. Had I half a chance I could bestow a World of Affection—I have it in me, being naturally a warm-hearted person, like Dad, and not an iceberg like others in the family.

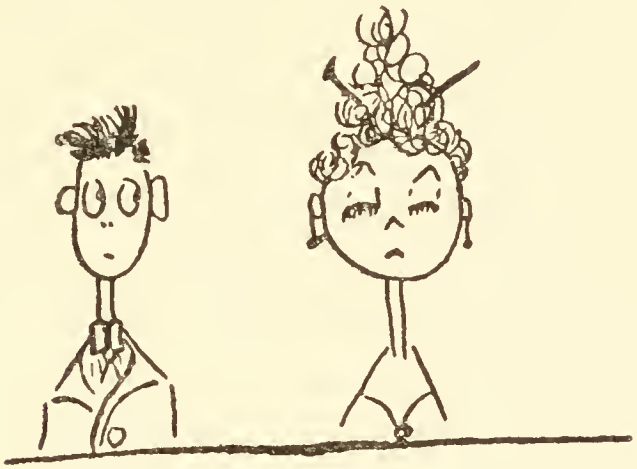
Mr. Jack is living at our house for the remainder of this school term—the Fraternity House where he was living having burned down, as you will remember after that Exciting Story in the newspapers, how he rescued his pet bulldog who was overcome with smoke, and was cast out in the world homeless by the fire. (Mr. Jack, of course, not the bulldog.) So father told Bill he might invite Mr. Jack to live with us for the short time until the close of school. But I deterioate.

I turned to sister May and put the question up to her in a civil manner.

"Love—what is it, sister May? Can you tell me?"

Sister May—she spells it M A E—said pointedly, looking down at her plate (Mr.

Jack was watching her—I could see his Bare Soul in his eyes):



I could see his Bare Soul in his eyes.

"I do not waste my time thinking about such silly things as Love. I am not the least interested in such subjects. The only thing that could possibly interest me in any MAN is Money."

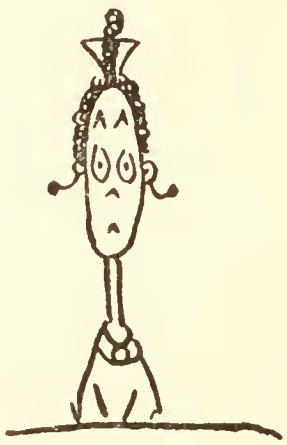
Then she flushed a little shame-facedly at this cold-blooded confession and added with the indifferent little laugh she always uses when fussed:

"Of course, that sounds mercenary I know, but Love won't build houses! And one Must live, you know."

And Poor Mr. Jack. He dropped his

eyes in dispair. I could see the flood of Passion overwhelming him. I longed to comfort him—my heart throbbed and throbbed. Then such words as he uttered—oh! they were wonderful, but not the truth as yet.

"Love," was the thrilling reply, "is a blessing that only a woman can bestow—a woman that wants to build a home, not a reputation."



Aunt Priss.

Then Aunt Priss sighed and looked Romantically at Mr. Jack. But Aunt Priss is to be excused—she's an old maid and loves everything in trousers. She lisps when she speaks and wears a false front.

"Lovth a Beautiful Dream," she quoted.

And brother Bill giggled, but he's to be excused also—he's hopelessly ignorant. How-

ever, he thinks he's a very wise person—he's a College Freshman, and every time he opens his mouth he steps on someone's toes.

Then Bill spoke up as usual, at the opportune time, with his low wit:

"I got ya, Aunt Priss. Love's a beauti-Scream—Mad Liquor, Wild Women and a Jazz Band."

And Dad had to take a hand in the matter.

"William!" he said, in the impressive voice he uses at lodge banquets, etc. And Bill slid down into his chair onto his shoulders, properly squelched. Then Dad turned to baby Pete (five years old), who by this time was showing signs of approaching speech—his plate was empty and his mouth would be soon.

"I'll bet Peter can tell us what Love is. Can't you Peter?"

And Dad leaned over for a greasy kiss—Father doesn't mind. "Tell us, what is Love, son?"

"Love's sompum 'teat."

Peter's a man-child all right.

Everybody laughed and Pete fled to Dad's lap in confusion and hid his head on Dad's shoulder, after Dad had wiped his face with his napkin. A moment later he was asleep.

"Peter's right," said Father, hugging the child to him. "Love's like a good appetite—never satisfied, always wanting something. Whenever I see Love coming my way, especially when accompanied by a kiss or two, I know it's time to keep my hand on my pocketbook." And he winked hastily at me as mother and sister stiffened visibly in their chairs—one could see they were reaching for their hammers to use just as soon as they were alone with their victim. Poor Dad, he always pays the price for his little jokes.

Bill excused himself from the table, and Mr. Jack followed him from the dining-room. Then the Family Wit(?) paused in the doorway and gave me a parting dig, as usual.

"Mother, you'd better teach Toots there

how to darn, she's got the Crazy Idea all right."

I cannot tolerate that boy—he has no soul.

The Dictionary says, "Love is a strong feeling of affection for one of the opposite sex; courtship—" But the Dictionary is wrong, all wrong, like the rest of the Family. I have a strong feeling of affection for one of the opposite sex, but to him I am as a grain of sand upon the Desert's Dusty Face—something not to be noticed, as on the face of a child, but something necessary to have around the house, to fetch and carry as it were. He courts another, but she spurns him unless she wants to go somewhere and no one else has asked her. He's jealous of her, I'm jealous of him, so what else can Love be, but the "Root of all Jealousy?"

II

KISSING—A HABIT THAT GROWS

For today's theme, I wish to present for discussion "Kissing versus Handshaking."

The Dictionary describes Kissing as "a salute with the lips"—but, I ask, why not substitute a Handshake for the Kiss as a means of Salutation?

Kissing is dangerous. We have many proofs of this well-known fact all ready at hand from the greatest Scientists and Wise Men in general, and now brother Bill has added a new proof to the already long list of proofs of this Common Danger—one worthy of our consideration even though Bill is ignorant and to be excused at times, but Pearls of Wisdom have been known to fall even

from the mouths of Fools and Sucklings.

The subject came up as usual at the supper-table.

I had seen sister May—I cannot spell it M A E, her name is written M A Y in the Family Bible and I cannot bring it upon myself to contradict that Sacred Institution of Truth even though others dare it—but, as I started to say, I saw Sister May kissing her girl friends adieu this afternoon. So at the supper-table I asked at large:

"Why do people kiss each other?"

And every one stared at me.

Of course, Bill was the first one to answer.

"That's right, little sunbeam, start something. The Family's too peaceful tonight, so hit us with a bombshell."

Then sister May got real humorous and resorted to her usual sarcastic comedy.

"Ye Gods! the Child is lost. Last night it was Love, and tonight Kissing. What's his name Toots?"

TOOTS! I ask you, could anybody bear a

name like that? It sounds like someone calling you a tin horn.

"Listen," said I, tragically, "my name is not Toots any more than your name is M A E and further more I want you to know and everyone to know, once and for all, that I am no Mere Child any more. I have a deeper conception of Life than just calls, parties, and such what-nots—I understand the great powerful Drama of Living better than some present that I could touch without hitting them with a hammer.

"Listen!" said I, tragically.

"My! How our Child has grown!" was the Family Wit's (?) retort.

But I had established myself as a person of Thinking Ability in the eyes of the Family by that time, so his weak sense of humor fell short of the mark.

"What do you ask such silly questions for?"

This was from mother. But even she does not understand me, so I forgive her for that careless remark.

"Because I see everyone doing it and I'm a Searcher after the Truth. I want to know, why people kiss?"

"Well, search me first, kidlet, I'm too young and inexperienced to answer you."

This was from Bill, of course, so I ignored him as one should do, considering that fact that his mental capacity wouldn't even tax a flea to carry it around. I went on with my discussion.

"Daily, I see women kiss each other. Men kiss each other and visa-versa. Why do they do it? Sister May kisses her friends, good-bye. Why? Father kisses Pete, even when

he's sticky and greasy—a veritable nest of germs, so to speak. Why? Father kisses everyone around the house, except Bridget of course. Why? We kiss Father. Why?"

"Well, I can answer that last one easily enough," said Dad with a pleasant grin. "That's the only receipt I get for all the hard-earned cash I hand out."

And for once mother overlooked a chance to launch an avalanche in the poor man's direction—perhaps Pete robbed her of the opportunity. He piped up—being unencumbered with food for the moment!

"Aw, kissin's what makes girls silly—'sonly game they play—kissin' games."

And Aunt Priss drew herself up in the haughty pose she always uses when about to sit on Dad or me or someone for our lack of "bringing-up."

"When I wath a girl, young people were not allowed to dithcuth thuch thubjecth. We were *theen* not heard."

"We were theen-not heard!"

Aunt Priss had one beau—he kissed her before he died.

She swept the table with a glance of scorn, and Pete scurried up into Father's lap for protection. Poor Dad, he fondled the dirty child and looked worried.

"Wha+'s the matter son, don't you want your supper? Is he sick?" and Dad looked anxiously at mother.

But Pete hid his head under Dad's coat and presently he snored—manlike. Mother answered:

"Well, if he is sick, remember you would give him a dime this afternoon. He's probably eaten a pound or so of cheap candy—he ought to be sick."

And during this interlude, I saw Mr. Jack watching sister May, and oh! how wonderfully tender was his smile. I could see his Soul bared to the naked eye, and while the health argument was on, I heard him utter these Gems of Speech softly, evidently for her ears alone:

"A Kiss is a woman's Pledge of Faith. But Pledges are easily broken."

His speech plainly took sis by surprise, I could see she was rattled—she shrugged her shoulders and hoisted her eyebrows in Cold Indifference, then replied in a low sort of a stage whisper:

"A Kiss is merely another manner of greeting—such as shaking hands."

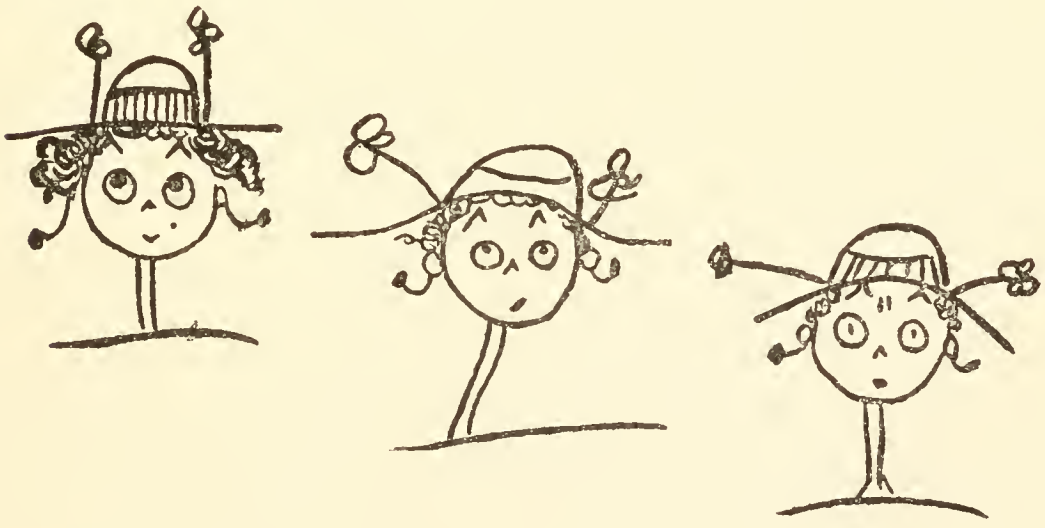
But the parental discussion came to an abrupt end just as sister started to reply, and her remark was audible to all ears. Bill giggled, sister turned crimson and dropped her eyes to her plate as though embarrassed, and for the first time I noticed Mr. Jack's ears were rather large and very red—he too looked

fussed, and mother took a hand in the matter to ward off Tribulation.

"Well, I must say, Kissing is growing to be quite a Common Fault. We are becoming so accustomed to kissing one another that it is becoming almost a Habit with us—a Bad Habit."

Then Bill entered the argument.

"You're right, mom, Kissing's a Bad Habit and it's up to us to warn the children of the Deadly Danger lurking in a Kiss." And this is where the Family Pest cast his Pearls before the Swine. "Kissing's a Habit that Grows. It's like this:



The first kiss leaves a memory,
The second, a desire,
The third one leaves a restless hope that
keeps the pulse afire.

A wishing for a fourth and fifth

The first Kiss leaves a memory,
The second, a desire;
The third one leaves a restless hope
That keeps the pulse afire,
Awishing for a fourth and fifth;
And then nobody knows
When you'll ever get enough,
For the Habit grows."

And then nobody knows
When you'll ever get enough
For the Habit grows.

And such were the words from the lips of ignorance that have given me food for thought.

III

DRAMA—WHY WRITE IT?

Although only sixteen, I am a great deal older in experience than the mere age would imply. I am the Authoress of Four Dramas. None of them have seen the light of day, as yet, on the American Stage, or any other Stage for that matter. But probably I am ahead of my time, as was our dearly beloved Shakespeare. Or perhaps I may be a little too Frank in my style—I believe in holding the looking-glass up to Nature and calling a Spade what it is. However, some day I shall accomplish the Inevitable in spite of modern Narrow-mindedness.

Tonight sister May at last decided to go to the theatre with Mr. Jack, and the subject of Drama arose for discussion at the supper-table.

"Where will we go?" asked sis in her best party manner. "Is there anything in town worth seeing?"

Sis, in her best party manner.

Said Mr. Jack in a low voice—one could see he was almost afraid to whisper even, for fear she would change her mind, but I could have told him there was no cause for worry, as it was Monday night and sis always manages to be seen at the Broadway Theatre on Society Night. He didn't stand a chance to lose her, unless, of course, someone else called up who had a Machine, then she'd cut him dead at the eleventh hour, so to speak. Count on sis choosing the "Showy Entrance," the Vane Thing. But I *Anticipate,* and lest my theme

Deterioate thereby, I shall continue what I first started to say. (I trust this last sentence will call attention to the fact that I have been using my dictionary as advised.)

Mr. Jack said in a low, hopeful voice:

"There is a good play at the Denham this week—a Love Story about Homebuilders."

"Well, that sort of a play would not appeal to me whatsoever," replied sis in a haughty manner, but in an equally low voice, so as not to be overheard by the entire Family.

But I heard, and oh! think of the Tragedy of it. Oh! how I yearned for just such an invitation that she so lightly spurned aside! The Vampire! Everything that my heart desired she cast carelessly into the waves of Cold Indifference. But such is Life.

"Why don't you try Vaudeville?" suggested Dad. "You can always find something you like in Vaudeville—besides it's cheaper."

But the Bored Creature spurned him also with a shrug of the shoulder.

"What do you think would be good, mother?" she hinted openly, giving mother a

chance to suggest the Broadway, but even mother failed her.

"There's an amateur performance of Shakespeare to be given for charitable purposes at the Women's Club tonight," said innocent little mother.

"Oh!" shuttered the tender thing. "I cahn't stand those amateurs."

Even Bill giggled, and for once his mirth was not untimely. I joined him. Father rapped on the table for quiet, but we'd had our little joy, so we could well afford to "Cave Canem."

Then Bill volunteered a suggestion:

"Say, Jack, take her to see a good show while you're about it. 'Why Girls Leave Home' is on at the Tabor this week. Some drammer. Good high-brow stuff."

Then he coughed and patted his chest importantly and quoted the usual pun that follows the mention of the above drama.

"Why Girls leave home—can you blame 'em?"

Dear me! but that boy is conceited. It

quite upset me. I retorted somewhat heatedly:

"I suppose you mean to insinuate that you're the reason. Well, let me tell you the painful truth—there'd never be a girl leave home on your account unless she was blind and hard of hearing."

"That so? Well, little sunbeam, just you follow me around one of these dark nights and wise up to what a home-breaker your little brother really is."

And Aunt Priss took it upon herself to stop the argument. She gave us a piercing glance and rapped on the water-pitcher.

"Brother John (to Dad) you mutht correct thethe thildren when they rethort to Thlang—it'th perfectly terrible what they do to the King'th English."

"But nothing to what we did to the Kaiser's Germans."

This was from Bill, of course, but it fell flat. Sister May had something to say and she killed his comedy with a glance.

"I quite agree with Aunt Priss," said the

would-be-Dutchess of the Manor, "their talk is shocking and their manners even worse—if that is possible."

"Well, don't get peeved and show your temper," I said in a real nasty way, I must admit—but my self-control had been badly tested. I was none too calm and my heart was breaking. No one understood me—no one desired so to do—so I spoke right up, I couldn't help it. "We all know what you are hinting for—why don't you come right out and say you want to go the Broadway Theatre because it's Society Night—and mother, what are you kicking me on the shins for?"

"Janet!" This time it was Dad's best lodge voice—it came as a menacing warning, so I "Slunk into Silence."

"Oh, the Broadway!" exclaimed the False Creature in a purring voice, " I hadn't thought of that. They are playing Ibsen tonight—I should love to go."

And I could bear no more. I quit the scene and carried my secret of grief and woe to my lonesome Sanctuary above stairs.

"Ah, Drama! Why write or see it when we live it daily?"

NOTE.—I wish to advance an argument on the correction made in my last theme, referring to the use of Capitols for Emphasis. Any reader of up-to-date Fiction or Advertisements will readily agree that it is being done by the Best Writers nowdays. In this matter I may be a little further advanced beyond the present authority now in Vogue in the public schools.

IV

GOLD THE CAUSE OF HER DOWNFALL

Gold was the cause of her downfall.

"Gold," read Dad from the evening paper, "was the cause of her downfall."

Then he said to the table in general, folding his paper and placing it on the floor by his chair:

"Too much Gold is the cause of more trouble than too little. You couldn't give me any more Gold than I've got."

And mother and sister stiffened with a jump

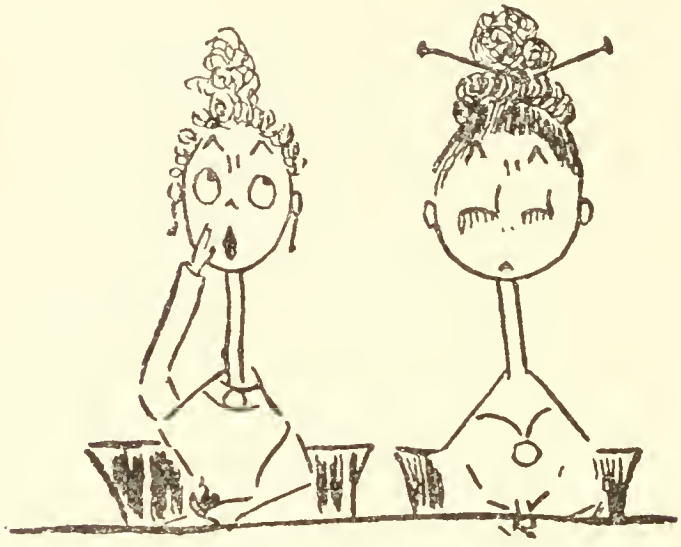
and focused a horrified glance on the poor man as though to question his Sanity.

"No, siree! you couldn't give me another dollar," repeated Father, slapping the table so emphatically that even the coffee cups jumped, "not another Dollar."

"Well, if you break any of the china, you'll need quite a few more dollars given you," was mother's sarcastic reply.

One could see neither she nor sis liked the present trend of the conversation. Money's a delicate subject among us. But Dad went on unheeding—when he has something to say he usually says it. Mom and sis heard him out to keep the peace. They listened patiently, as though it was something to be sat through, like they do in church. The rest of us were sharpening our wits and looking for an opening to thrust in our little "Javelins of Speech." Bill was waiting for an opportunity to break in with some fresh remark, and I waited with mind intent to grasp some logical point of argument to wrestle with. And Pete paid Dad the tribute of pausing, with his spoon

halfway to his mouth, to watch, with admiring eyes, his Idol speaking.



Like church—something to be sat through.

"What could I do with more Gold?" Father continued. "I have a good paying business. We live comfortably and well. We have plenty of everything necessary to make us happy. Not all the Luxuries, perhaps, that more Gold would buy, and likewise none of the worries. May is complaining this evening of having nothing to do, and she needs a good night's rest. If we had more money she'd fill the house with a mob of Bridge-crazy women and spoil everybody's pleasant evening at home. I'd have to put on a long-tailed coat and stand around like a homeless relative,

and all the time I'd be worried about Bill out loose with his Mad Liquor and Wild Women in a 90 horse-power Destroyer. And I'd be blushing every time I opened a newspaper and found Janet's name staring me in the face from some scandalous write-up about Dramas of her own writing and production with my money. No, siree! I'm content with what I have."

Well, there was more said, but it did not bear directly on this subject of Gold. It was Dad's remark about sister May having nothing to do that evening that brought the full realization of "The Sting of Gold" down upon my shoulders.

Going upstairs after supper was over, I found Mr. Jack standing on the landing by the 'phone. Then—be calm my fluttering heart, beat not in VEIN (see note below) desire—I found he was waiting for me. He beckoned me to his side and laid a tender palm on my trembling shoulder and asked a favor of me.

"Listen, Toots (and *Toots* from his lips had

the ring of golden trumpets instead of the usual tin-horn aspect)—listen, Toots, dear child, if anyone calls me on the 'Phone will you answer and tell them I'm not at home. Will you? That's a good chicken." (Even this came as music to my ears. That man could call me anything from a Bug to an elephant and make me feel that the "World was Mine.")

I nodded my consent. I dared not speak, lest by the dulcet longing in my Tones, I might appraise him of my Secret.

He went on to explain.

"I want to break a date with a Party. Will you help me?"

Then the 'phone rang. I answered. It was for him, but the party I was to break the Date with, was—A WOMAN.

Oh, vile passion that consumed me! A jealous poison choked me. I know not how I ever controlled myself to speak, but I did my promised duty. I said he was not at home.

"Are you sure?" insisted the Party, in the voice of a Siren.

"Abso—tively," I moaned, clutching my throat while I hung up the receiver. And I turned to him, wondering what apology he had to offer for bringing that Siren into my young life, and he offered me—GOLD. Think of the Tragedy of it. GOLD, to soothe my aching heart! I could bear no more. I spurned his bribe—I thrust aside his outstretched Gold and tore up the stairs to my Sanctuary.

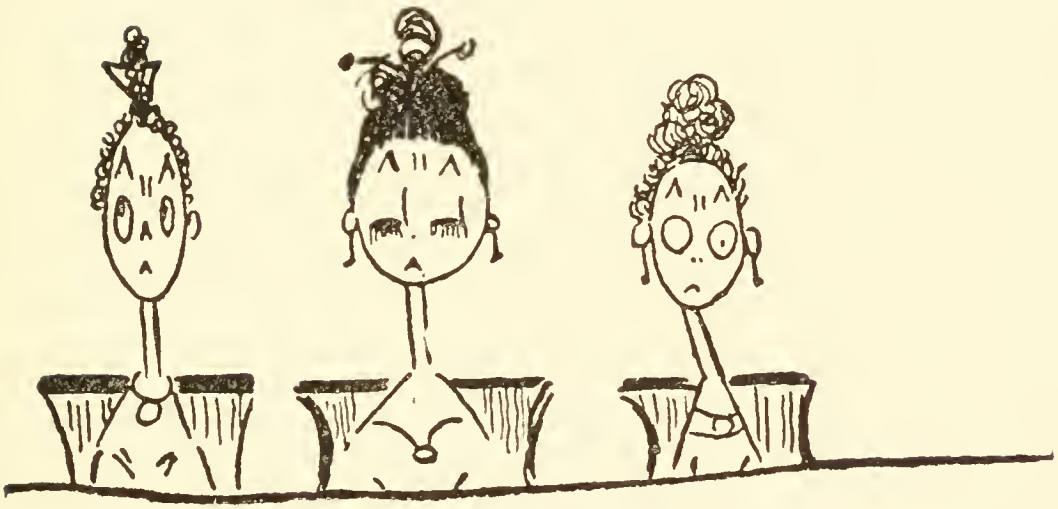
"Ah! Toots," I heard him call after me, "Don't be bashful. Buy yourself some candy —you've done me a great favor."

Think of the sting of it. Gold! Then, Woe added to Insult, I saw him a little later slipping sister May's Opera Cloak about her bare shoulders—they were going to the theatre again. Mine was the sacrifice that made it possible for those two to find happiness in his Gold that night.

NOTE.—Having noticed the corrections in my last essay on the word "Vane" misused, I trust I have used it correctly this time. Also, having received a low-grade mark for the use of Slang, I wish to ask, How is one to distinguish Slang from Forcible English?

V

DANCING—AN ART OR AN ARTIFICE?



Trouble's Black Mantel of Gloom.

I was late getting home from school yesterday evening and when I arrived at the domicile, the Family was already at the supper-table. And the moment I entered the dining-room I knew Trouble had cast her black mantel of Gloom over the place. Mother was sitting as stiff as a poker at the table and staring rigidly at the electric light. Sister May's eyes were on her plate, but two telltale spots

of red glowed on her cheeks—it wasn't Rouge, it was suppressed Temper. I knew what these symptoms meant. Someone was going to be "sat on"; something had gone wrong. Hastily I reviewed my actions for the day to see if I had transgressed anywhere, but I found my conscience clear. I looked at brother Bill, wondering what he had done, but he was eating peacefully and his ears were not red, so I knew him to be exempt. Then I focused my searching gaze on Father—he looked ill at ease and I decided he was the guilty party.

Poor Man! I always feel sorry for him when he oversteps one of the thousand little rules of conduct so necessary to keep mother's and sister's nerves from standing on edge. They usually "floor" him so completely that it costs him a new dress or a five dollar bill to reinstate himself in their good graces. Now Bill and I can fight our way back into good standing, but Father is a peaceable party and chooses to pay ransom rather than wage war. So my heart went to him, but without cause. His first remark, when I was well seated at the

table, was directed at ME. Then I found I was the sinner. Oh, the injustice of it all!

Father said severely—I could tell by his manner of speech that mother had been coaching him:

"Janet, you will meet me in the Library after supper."

"Why, the Library?" I asked, dumbfounded. "Goodness me! What have I done?"

And mother rapped on the table for silence. Then my temper overcame my self-control and I answered heatedly:

"I'll not meet Dad or anyone else in the Library after supper. I absolutely refuse to submit to another one of those three-cornered affairs again."

"That's enough, Janet! Don't talk back. You will do as you are told and keep quiet about it," said mother, frigidly.

"I'll not keep quiet," said I very firmly. "I'll not be a victim to this unjust way of getting me in bad any longer. First someone gets a grudge against me—and heaven only knows why, for I am a peace-loving citizen

like Father, and further more I am no longer a Mere Child—"

And Bill snickered, rousing my ire all the more, so I continued fiercely before Father could send me from the table in disgrace:

"I will not be denied the right of Free Speech and Justice any longer because I am considered still a child. First someone gets mad at me and then, afraid to face me, he or she goes to Dad and tells him all manner of things about me, and then I can't defend myself or prove the charges against me false. No, sir! I'll face you all here and now, together, but not one at a time in the Library. What's the charge against me, Father?"

But sis drew herself up coolly and said in her most haughty manner:

"Surely, Father, you will not allow such talk before the servants (and we have only one hired girl, Bridget) and before—"

She hesitated calling Mr. Jack a stranger to his face, but everyone understood her meaning. Mr. Jack said hurriedly, pushing back his chair:

"Perhaps I'd better be excused."

And Father said quietly:

"Sit still, Jack, you're as much a member of this Family as anyone. Sit still and eat your supper. Janet's right. We'll settle this matter now, before all present."

Then to me:

"Janet, your mother and sister have complained to me of your Flirting with Strangers."

"Flirting with Strangers!"

FLIRTING! ! ! Oh, the injustice of it! And thereby hangs the Tale. Instantly, I knew where the Trouble came from.

The night before we had been to a Banquet given by Father's Lodge and there had been dancing afterward. A friend of Father's, Mr. Wright, is related to those wonderful dancers from New York City, Mr. and Mrs. Barnes. As you all know, Mr. and Mrs. Barnes are visiting in town at present. Mrs. Barnes is recovering from a sprained ankle, acquired while dancing at the Orpheum Theatre last week, but Mr. Barnes attended the Banquet and we were all introduced to him. Think of it! I met the real Mr. Barnes of New York! But wait—the surprise of surprises is yet to come.

A Last Hope.

The dancing started. A mere youth, a twaddling, giggly neighbor of ours insisted

that I dance with him, and I was about to accept him as a last hope, when Mr. Barnes was introduced to our Family. Then—ah, moment of supreme delight!—suddenly Mr. Barnes turned to mother and asked if he might be permitted to DANCE WITH ME! And mother gave her consent! Of course, he danced with sister May too, but he chose me first. Then later, when the Lodge Officers asked him if he would give an exhibition dance for them, he said he would do so if mother would allow me to dance with him. Think of it! And again mother gave her consent and I danced alone, in public, with the celebrated Mr. Barnes, and we were lauded with bursts of applause and must dance again, and he remarked to mother afterward that I danced as well as his wife.

And not only did Mr. Barnes deign to notice me, but he had a friend with him—a Mr. Dain, also from New York—who asked mother if he might be permitted to dance with me, and even he sought my arm for a second time during the evening. Both were hand-

some men. I was quite popular, perhaps a little more so than May. She was quite Green with Envy all evening.

So I knew the cause of the complaint to Dad.

I answered their charge of flirting with a pure heart. I said quietly to Father:

"Father, you know I never Flirt. I hope I have enough of your good Common Sense to be above such Trifles. Last night I could not help it because Mr. Barnes chose me as his partner instead of sister May. She is positively Green with Envy and has adopted this means of revenge. That is why I am charged with Flirting with Strangers."

—positively green with envy."

I saw Father choke back a smile and so I knew the danger was past.

Sister May then burst forth in anger:

"My dear child (and this to me is worse than an Epitaph from the lips of a drunken sailor) —my dear child, don't be quite so conceited. I would never make a spectacle of myself doing an exhibition dance in public. I do not aspire to the Vaudeville Stage—I have too much self-respect for that I hope. If I was Green last night, it was because I was embarrassed almost to death at the publicity you gave the Family Name."

Then I said to her:

"Then why, my dear Grandmother, do you accuse me of flirting?"

"Because it is the shameless truth. All during the Banquet you fairly ogled Mr. Barnes. And you were as crude in your effort to Flirt as some Vulgar Barmaid. It was quite revolting. And until you can be taught a little self-restraint, you'd better be kept at home."

I was speechless with horror, and tears came

to my eyes. Oh, the Infamy of it all! I could think of nothing to say then, but since I've thought of a dozen scorching replies.

But Father came to my rescue. He said firmly to May:

"May, you don't need to use such forcible language with Janet. You may have been mistaken about her Flirting."

"Mistaken?" grunted sister May in disgust, "Father, I do hope some day you will have your eyes opened for you. Why would a man —a married man, a professional dancer— 'phone twice this afternoon and ask for a young girl whom he had only met once, if he had not been so encouraged by her advances that he felt free to call over the 'phone under an assumed name and ask to speak with her? Then he left his number for Janet to call—we looked it up in the book and it was Mr. Wright's apartment. Mother answered the 'phone. Isn't it true, mother?"

"Quite true," said mother with dignity.

"Janet, what have you to say to this?" Father asked severely.

"Absolutely nothing!" said I, haughtily. "I cannot help it if a man falls victim to my Charms. Look upon me as you will, consider me a Flirt—a Vampire if you must—but I am innocent, guiltless!"

Victim to my charms

And Bill giggled.

I saw Mr. Jack watching me in an awed sort of a way, and for once I knew he was aware of my existence. I felt awful—I was suffering the Torments of a Martyr, but his glance at me soothed my Agony. I would suffer the pangs of Death if I could arouse his interest in me.

But Bill warded off the pending blow of Doom from my young shoulders.

"Victim to your charms is good, sis," he giggled. "Maybe you'll be a dancer yet, if Nature is kind. Dancing is not an Art but an Artifice—a clever excuse for the woman Nature has favored in a shapely way to display her charms. They all start out to be dancers by taking off a few clothes at a time—first at parties, then at society balls, then at private charitable affairs, and so on, until they can expose themselves in a thin veil and a sweet smile without being laughed at. Then they call themselves Classical Dancers. It's Nature, not Movement we look at in Dancing—the Artifice not the Art. Take Aunt Priss as proof of my statement. She might be the classiest stepper in the world, but she'd never make a Classical Dancer—Nature is not with her."

And Aunt Priss gave him a killing glance of mingled scorn and horror.

"William!" said Dad in his best Lodge Voice, and Bill hastily quit the scene. For once I was grateful to him—he had diverted the stream of Wrath from my direction.

"If Nature is kind."

Then the 'phone rang and Mr. Jack went to answer, saying he was expecting a call.

. . . . . ,

I shall have to use a row of dots here as the remainder of this Theme does not bear directly

upon the Subject—it is the result of my dancing experience the night before. I add here as proof of Bill's statement about Dancing being an Artifice.

Upon leaving the supper-table, I started for my santuary above stairs to ponder in solitude, and on the stair-landing I found Mr. Jack waiting for me again. My heart stood still with mingled emotions—with dread lest he bring that Siren into my young life again, and with the hope that rises continually in the Human Breast.

"That 'phone call was for you!" he whispered dramatically, without any preliminaries. "It was from that MAN!"

"What MAN?" I gasped in surprise.

"That DANCER!" he answered, almost hissing the words.

Dare I believe he was jealous? It suddenly occurred to me that he had been lead to believe that I was a wild sort of a person, and suddenly I began to realize that the wild women attract the opposite sex more than the tame ones like myself. He misunderstood

me—like everyone else—but if by misunderstanding his eyes could be opened, I decided to let him jump to his own conclusions. Anything was better than being considered a Mere Child.

I said, clutching my bare throat and staggering the least bit with emotion:

"Where did he call from? I must talk with him."

But the man stood silent a moment, considering me with solemn eyes. Finally he asked abruptly:

"Why *must* you talk with him?"

"Because," I murmured, "because, because he is married—this must be the end."

Then he said softly:

"Toots, I'm thankful you're such a sensible youngster, and because you've got so much good comom sense, I'm going to trust you. You know I ought to tell your Father about this 'phone call, but you seem to be having a great deal of trouble tonight, so I tell you what I'll do. That man is waiting for you to call at a certain number. We'll go around to

the Drug Store, where you can talk to him and explain the trouble he is getting you into by calling the house here. But remember—he is a married man, and I trust you. I'll give you his number if you will promise me that you will not have anything more to do with him, that you will never make a date with him, and that you will try to forget him. Will you promise?"

And he caught me by the shoulders and sought my eyes with his—ah, heavenly moment supreme!—but I withheld my gaze and murmured weakly:

"I shall try to forget."

"And you promise me not to make a date with him at any time later?"

And my heart was fluttering so that I could not keep my voice from trembling when I answered as solemnly as though I was taking the Marriage Vow:

"I do."

"Then get your hat and coat and come with me."

And I heard him go down into the library

and tell Dad that he was taking me to the Drug Store for an ice-cream soda—that he owed me a treat for the many favors I had done for him.

So I went with him out into the night and walked two heavenly blocks to the Drug Store. There, alone in a booth, after he had given the mysterious, married man's 'phone number, I called up Mary Jones and spent a very pleasant ten minutes talking to her about everything under the sun. He waited patiently out by the cigar counter where he could see me in the booth. I acted wild, distracted, heartbroken, to the outward eye, but inwardly I raged with triumph. That was where I used the artifice that was the result of my dancing affair. But he wanted me WILD and I decided then to be so WILD that I'd make a drunken Indian look as tame as an angleworm on a sunny pavement.

VI

CLOTHES

"A rag, a bone and a hank of hair, are quite fashionable nowadays."

Last night at the supper-table, the question of Clothes came up for discussion. I was wearing my best waist—but that is not saying much for the waist, having been made over from one sister May squandered her money upon, then didn't like. Mother rebuked me for dressing-up, but I voiced my sentiments openly and before all present.

"Well, I'm going to wear everything I have and wear it hard. I get the cast-offs from the whole family, and if I must wear them, the only hope I have of getting a new dress once in an age, is by wearing out the combined remnants of the family in a hurry. Hereafter I shall dress for dinner, supper,

breakfast, luncheon, and tea, and for any other occasion, however slight."

"You're lucky to have such an extensive wardrobe," said sister May with a pert giggle.

"Well, you'll have me to thank for more new clothes," I answered. "I suppose the faster I wear out the cast-offs, the quicker you'll buy new things to keep me supplied with remnants. I doubt if I'll ever be able to get ahead of the game and win the prize my heart is set upon."

Then little Peter piped up:

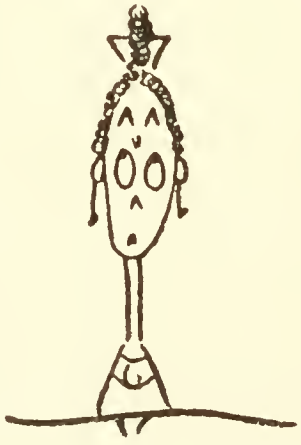
"Aw! what do you want of clothes anyhow? Girls is all the time a dressing-up. When they can't find nothin' more to dress they pick on me."

And Dad took him in his arms as usual and said cheerfully:

"You're right, Peter. What's the use of clothes anyhow? If we were all like you, satisfied with what we have on, I'd never be kept broke buying clothes."

"And I agree with Pete," said Bill. "Why wear clothes at all?"

"Yes, that would be a blessing," said I. "If you'd appear without any clothes, no one would know you were around. It's only your clothes that cast a shadow. The only thing about you that can be seen is your Adam's Apple, and that used to have me worried to death for fear it would knock your brains out when you swallow, until I came to realize that that's the reason you have no brains—they had to leave room somewhere in your head for that Adam's Apple to get out of the way when you eat, so they made space by leaving out the brains."



"Thildren, thildren!"

"Thildren, thildren," scolded Aunt Priss. "My! What language! But thpeaking about clotheth," she continued when all was still, "it

doeth theem to me we're wearing leth and leth everyday. Look at May'th waitht—thothe thleeveth, that collar—why the jutht ath well have nothing on at all. I thould think the'd catch her death of cold."

"Oh," said May indifferently, "this chiffon net is quite warm enough. I simply roast to death when I have to wear something tight up around my neck."

"Well, when I wath a girl," said Aunt Priss haughtily, "clotheth were made so as to leave something to the imagination."

"Yes," said Bill again, "all they leave to the imagination these days is their ears. Clothes are for a different purpose nowdays than merely to drape us. I admit that clothes make me. Dad says, 'they break me.' Mother's axiom is, 'By my clothes they rate me.' Sister May concedes, 'Clothes bake me.' Pete complains, 'Clothes hate me,' and the Family Hope there yells, 'Her clothes o'er-take me! Help!' "

And Bill quit the scene hurriedly.

Then the telephone rang. Mr. Jack shot a

glance of concern in my direction, and I hurriedly excused myself to answer the call. When I got there, imagine my horror when I recognized HER voice. It was the Siren calling again. She asked for Mr. Jack. I heard him coming out into the hall, and a jealous passion overcame me. I said daringly—a great scheme suddenly popping into my head:

"I was told to tell you to be at the Savoy Hotel at seven-thirty."

The Siren-calling.

I had made up my mind to see my rival. If he liked Wild Women, I was determined that I would dress like one. I would see this Siren, learn her weak points and perfect them in myself. I would wear a Siren's clothes. The great scheme kept growing in my head as I talked to her. I knew he was listening in the hall below. I would make him believe I was talking to my friend—the dancer. I would make a date supposedly with him. I felt that Mr. Jack would follow to watch me, perhaps. If he did, I would go to the Savoy Hotel. There the Siren would see him—she would think he came to keep that appointment with her and so claim his attention. That would point her out to me and so enable me to LEARN—the art of the Siren. A wonderful thought! I acted upon it immediately.

"Can you be at the Savoy by seven-thirty?" I then asked in a hushed, guarded voice—but loud enough to be heard in the hall below.

"Yes, thank you," said the Siren sweetly, "tell him I'll be there. And pardon me, but

isn't this the little friend MY Jack speaks of so often?"

"MY JACK!" Those were her very words—and my passion quite consumed me. He had been talking about ME to HER. And I could not keep my voice from trembling when I replied:

"Yes, I am your—little friend."

Then she said in honeyed tones:

"And I know you are a true friend to Jack and I want to thank you for your interest in him. Please tell him I will be waiting for him in the lobby, and I thank you sincerely."

She hung up the receiver.

"Yes, we *must* say—goodbye," I whispered in a choking voice as I hung up my receiver and collapsed against the wall. And he came bounding up the stairs to my side.

"Janet," he demanded severely, "who called just now?"

But I remained speechless.

"It was that Dancer—I know it was. And I heard you make a date with him. Have you forgotten your promise to me?"

And he reached for my chin to force me to look at him, but with a muffled sob of anguish, I pushed him aside and tore up the stairs to my sanctuary.

My plan promised to succeed. I knew he would watch every move I made, so I stole into sister's May's room and borrowed her new hat and cloak and long, black-jet ear-rings. The hat is one of those cute new styles that sit at a most alluring angle over one eye and the coat is of black plush with sealskin collar and cuffs. I hastily did my hair up on my head—I was wearing it down my back in braids as approved by mother for school purposes—donned the ear-rings and the hat and the cloak, and stole down the stairs and out of the house by the side door. I knew I looked like a Million Dollars and so felt quite satisfied.

As I stole down the stairs, I caught a glimpse of Mr. Jack evidently loitering in the hall where he could keep an eye on both the front and side outside doors, and as I scurried around the house into the street, I saw

him coming hurriedly out of the front entrance, pulling on an overcoat. He was trailing me—it was thrilling.

It is not a long walk from our house to the Savoy, but it is rather dark in spots and I would have been scared to death if I had not known he was following somewhere behind. As it was, I was nervous and the chills were running up and down my spine.

At the hotel, I hurried into the Lobby and across to the Ladies' Parlor. There I sank into a chair just inside the door—the place was in a shaded gloom, and I could watch the Lobby without being seen.

A moment later Mr. Jack came in through the street doors and started a hurried search of the place with his eyes. Then I saw the Siren. She was sitting near the street door and went directly over to him. And, Oh, what a shock I received! Dare I believe my own eyes? He caught her by the hand, took off his hat, smiled happily, then kissed her before everybody. I was completely forgotten in that instant—a red haze floated before my

eyes, and for a moment I could see nothing more. Then my eyesight cleared, and I got a good look at that creature. Can you believe me? She was decidely OLD and THIN. She wore the plainest kind of a traveling suit and looked as tame as a church deaconess. But one can never tell what latent charm some man will find in every woman. There was I, dressed up in all the borrowed finery I could lay my hands upon, yet he chose her in all her plainness. Man is a strange brute. Then to show how completely he had forgotten me, he escorted her across the Lobby into the dining-room without even a glance in my direction. I had risen from my chair and had walked into the Lobby in plain view of everybody.

I watched them disappear into the Rose room and was at a loss what to do next—the thought of the dark walk home alone quite terrified me now. Then I saw a man, on a lounge opposite, watching me. The moment he caught my eye he smiled and, rising to his feet, came straight toward me. The

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Blood froze in my Vains. (This is the last way left to spell the above word—I hope I have it correct this time.) I started to run—then I recognized him. It was Mr. Dain, the friend of Mr. Barnes, the dancer, whom I met at the Lodge Dance a few nights ago.

And as he came toward me, he said in a charming voice:

"Well! well! If it isn't little Miss Janet Lee! What a pleasant surprise! Are you looking for someone? Can I be of any assistance?"

"Thank you so much," I said, quite at ease at once. He had such a nice smile—so reassuring, and he had lovely wavy hair. He was handsome and beautifully dressed. "Thank you so much, but I must be going home; I'm afraid I've missed the friends I was expecting to meet."

"Have you looked in the Rose room?—it's quite crowded this evening."

"I haven't been in there," I answered evasively. (It is against my principles to tell a lie.

No matter how Wild I was to become, I would have to be truthful.)

"Shall we look in there? If you can't find them, perhaps you will have dinner with me?"

"Thank you," I said again, "I would enjoy a cup of tea."

And I accepted his arm that he so graciously extended and went proudly into the Dining-room.

Directly opposite the door was Mr. Jack and the Siren. They both saw me enter. Mr. Jack almost dropped his fork in astonishment. He was eating pie and coffee again and he stared at me with his mouth open. I ignored them both.

The head waiter made quite a fuss over us —evidently he knew my escort. He led us to a very conspicuous table and helped me out of my borrowed coat and threw it over the back of the chair so that the pink satin lining was exposed to view—it glowed like an open rose. I was thankful then that I had dressed up in my best waist for supper that evening. The waist is a delicate shade of green that goes

well with my blond hair. I caught a glimpse of myself in a long mirror on a pillar opposite and was quite satisfied. The ear-rings and the hat gave me just the finishing touch that I needed for the Vampire Role.

And I ordered a cup of tea.

"What!' exclaimed my escort, with a merry laugh. "Tea?" For one so young?"

There was that Epitaph again. It quite incensed me.

"Listen," I said to him in a very determined way. "If we are to have a permanent and lasting peace at this table, you will kindly refrain from referring to ages. Like all women, I am a great deal older than I look."

And I thought for a moment he was going to laugh in my face—my ire was rising rapidly and he was on dangerous ground, but I soon saw it was his effort to choke back a slight coughing spell that caused the queer expression on his face.

"But tea—" he objected pleasantly, "I thought you said you were hungry."

"Well, I would prefer chocolate and wa-

fers," I admitted truthfully. "They do make heavenly chocolate here."

So he ordered two cups of chocolate and a special cake, and we had a merry time. In a mirror I could see Mr. Jack watching me and I must confess it was rather a brilliant scene. There were rose-colored lights and music to heighten my enjoyment, and my escort and I were all smiles and laughter. We attracted a great deal of attention, which we accepted as our just due. I felt we made a striking couple.

Finally Mr. Jack and the Siren arose from their repast and started for our table. Goodness me! My heart stopped still when he started toward me—I saw he meant to introduce that woman to me and I froze on the spot.

"Janet," he said pleasantly, "I want you to meet my Aunt Dora. Aunt Dora, this is little Miss Mischief."

His Aunt! Think of it! I was almost stunned with surprise, but I arose to greet her, and she put her arm about my shoulders

in the most friendly way in the world and whispered in my ear, "I like you, little Miss Mischief," and then she kissed me.

Then she turned to Jack and said sweetly:

"Why, I already know Janet. I talked to her over the 'phone tonight and she delivered your message to meet me here."

Thus was I exposed. I could have died on the spot. Mr. Jack only winked at me. His Aunt continued, not noticing my confusion:

"And Janet, dear," she said, releasing her embrace and taking both my hands in hers, "I want to thank your whole family for the care they have taken of my Jack. I tried to find time to call on you all, but this has been a hurried business trip to the city for me, and I have not had a moment to spare. I am going East tonight to try and finish up this business, and when I return I hope to meet your father and your mother and the sister May that Jack is always speaking of. And then I hope you and I will be the best of friends so that you will take an interest in me, because you and I and Jack can have some

exciting times. I love excitement, don't you, little Miss Mischief?"

And she reached over and pinched my cheek and whispered in my ear:

"You'll watch out for my Jack, won't you? Take good care of him for me and I shall never forget you—you beautiful child. He's all I have left in the world, and I'm so busy that I cannot keep an eye on the boy as I should, but I feel so satisfied when I know he is with you."

And with that she left us, saying she must go to her room and pack. And I resumed my seat, and to my surprise Mr. Jack boldly helped himself to the extra seat at our table. As he pulled the chair back from the table to sit down, he said with a voice full of hidden meaning, quite ignoring my escort:

"I am sorry I missed my appointment with you Janet, but we'll go home now—anytime you're ready."

For a second I was embarrassed almost to death. What could I say? I looked into my escort's eyes and he winked at me. Every-

body was winking at me, it seemed. Then he spoke, extending his hand good-naturedly to Mr. Jack.

"I am Mr. Dain—of Murray and Dain, at the Orpheum this week. I was just asking Janet if she would care to see the show to night. I have seats for her at the box-office, but she will need an escort, perhaps you will come with her and be my guest for the evening?"

And his smile won Mr. Jack. And the man was an actor—think of it, an actor! But Mr. Jack liked him at sight and he answered heartily, grasping the actor's hand:

"My name's Day—Jack Day. If Janet will let me take her, I would love to go and see your act. I heard the boys at school talking about you—they say you're the best ever."

"Well, thanks to the boys. What do you say, we walk down and get the seats now? I must be on my way to the show-shop, it's getting late. But I hate to lose good company. Walk a way with me, won't you?"

And so, escorted by these two perfectly handsome men, I made a Triumphal March out of that hotel and down the street to the theatre. In "vain" I looked for some familiar face to witness my triumph, but never met a soul I could speak to.

At the theatre Mr. Dain gave us two tickets to the show, then had to hurry away, and Mr. Jack and I were left alone together at last. The first thing he said was:

"Of course, Janet, it's none of my business how you managed to meet all these strange men, but I can look into those devilish blue eyes and make a good guess."

I could only blush. I was so confused that I was speechless, but I was happy. I knew then I had him convinced that I was Wild.

Presently he looked at his watch and said quietly:

"It's almost eight o'clock. We can catch a car home and get back before the first act is over."

"But what are we going home for?" I

asked in dismay. Home had never entered my head. My spirits took a sudden drop.

"Your mother doesn't know you're out, and besides May might need her coat and hat," he said heartlessly. "We'd better hurry home and get an honest start. You can tell your mother you went over to see Mary Jones, if she has missed you, and I'll ask her if you can come to the Orpheum with me."

So home we went. I was happy no longer. I had a presentiment of Trouble ahead. I was afraid to trust my fate in mother's hands, especially after wearing sister May's clothes.

He spoke only once to me on the way home, and that was to say quietly:

"I'm glad you did not break your promise to me and make a date with that Dancer."

No one had missed me when I got home. I went in by the side door and put the borrowed clothes back in sister May's room without being discovered. Then I started down stairs and I heard mother talking.

"No, I'm sorry, Jack," she was saying, "but Janet cannot go out on school nights."

Then he replied lightly.

"I had two seats for the Orpheum given to me and I thought Janet might be one in the family that liked Vaudeville besides Father Lee."

Then sister May spoke up with a soft laugh:

"That's a good hit at me, Jack, but I never said I didn't like Vaudeville, because I do, and to prove it, I'll go with you tonight—that is, if you'll ask me."

And I heard his voice choke and grow a little husky with suppressed emotion, and he said a little too eagerly:

"Will you really go?"

And so they went to the theatre again. Ah! think of the Tragedy of it. It was my sacrifice again for their happiness. She wore the new hat, the ear-rings, and the new coat, and went and sat in my seat.

I could bear no more. I rushed up to my lonesome sanctuary and gave way to my woe.

NOTE.—Having been accused, by our

worthy English Instructress, of using words of which I do not understand the meaning, I wish to say that the word "Child" to me is more than an Oath or an Execration as suggested in the corrections. An "EPITAPH," according to my dictionary is "a memorial inscription on a tomb or monument." "CHILD" is the inscription on the headstone over the grave wherein lie buried all my worldly desires.

VII

WILD WOMEN—VAMPIRES, ANCIENT AND MODERN

The subject of yesterday's History lesson being "Cleopatra," and the subject of today's English being "The Vampire" by Kipling, I shall endeavor to draw some conclusions upon the Wild Women of the past and present, and, having been placed in a position where I could properly estimate the possibilities in store for a Wild Woman (I cannot truthfully say I have ever been "wild," but to be "wild" is my ambition because, although only sixteen, I have had a greater understanding of the term "wild" than many women of double my years through having had an innocent deed mistaken for a "wildish act" by a certain friend of the family's)—but, to draw this sentence to a proper conclusion,

as I started to say, having been placed in a position where I could carefully and conscientiously estimate the effect of the lure of a Wild Woman upon one of the opposite sex (end of substantive clause as requested to be illustrated in today's theme) sex, I wish to advance a defensive word in behalf of the "Vampire Woman."

NOTE:

The above sentence contains one hundred and seventy-eight words and I trust is properly constructed, according to the directions given in the past lesson on "clause building," and which I trust will establish a new record for lengthy sentences, in competition with the one containing seventy-nine words submitted by John McBribe in yesterday's English Class; upon which occasion our most worthy instructress commented upon the excellent memory the scholar possessed in being capable of retaining the subject and predicate clearly in mind while grouping his words so as to procure a clear concise meaning in a lengthy sen-

tence and still reach an effective result. (One hundred and four words in the last sentence.) I am not aspiring for praise by those efforts—they are merely to demonstrate the equality of the feminine mind to the masculine mind, our worthy instructress having given the impression on numerous occasions of the superiority of the male over the female of the species. I am a woman of the new school and will not admit any such supremacy of man. (End of note.)

THEME CONTINUED:

Last evening the subject of "Wild Women" was introduced by the Family for discussion at the supper-table. Father was glancing through the evening paper while eating—a habit that the combined efforts of mother and sister May have never been able to successfully overcome—and his eye chanced to discover an advertisement of our "worst" known Vampire on the screen.

The Vampire

"Another Vampire Film!" he proclaimed to the table at large, and thus interrupting a discussion between mother and Mr. Jack on auction. "It is funny how an advertisement of this nature will attract the public eye. 'The Queen of Vampires,' 'The meanest woman in the world,' and more such rot."

Then he started in, in a very determined way, to make himself heard by rapping on the table with his spoon. Mother's and sister May's eyes met for a moment with a knowing glance, then sought the ceiling in a resigned manner.

Father continued:

"I tell you it's absurd, the things those Film Writers make an actress go through in order to have her appear more wicked than some other Vampire woman. A nice way for grown up men to spend their time—thinking up meaner tricks for one Vampire to out-vamp the other one with. I tell you it's absurd to try and make the public believe that a woman with such a wild disposition would appeal to any man—any real man."

But there is where Father shows his inexperience.

"Father," I said, taking up the argument in my own fashion, "History proves to us that, in order to become famous, a woman must be wild."

The table gasped at me in astonishment.

Said Bill, with an imitation groan of despair:

"Now it comes out—she starts something. What is it to be this week? Last week it was 'Love' and this week it commences with 'Wild Women.' Oh, what a life our child must lead—how different the strenuous high-school

days of modern times compared with the gentle days when I was a lad. Say on, oh wise young person, say on."

I answered him crushingly.

"My remark was not intended to arouse a clouded brain to attempt to think and so cause it to scatter a great deal of senseless nothing to the four winds of Heaven—I was answering a profound argument with a debate in defense of the 'Wild Life.'"

"Help!" was the feeble attempt he made to reply, accompanying the words with the action of sliding under the table, holding his nose with one hand and pointing upward with the other in pantomine of a person drowning.

I ignored him and turned to Dad with my argument again.

"History proves to us that the woman who is to be remembered down the ages to come is the one that leads the wildest life. Do we read of sweet, peaceful ladies accomplishing anything in the annals of History? No! Sit at home with your hands folded and you are forgotten—do something wild and you up-

set Kingdoms with the attention you attract."

"Well! For goodness sake!" said mother in alarm. "What have you been reading?"

And Father suddenly glared at mother as much as to say he condemned her on the spot for neglecting me for her social duties.

Again I was misunderstood by the entire family. Sister May was the only one seemingly not overcome. She said sarcastically to everyone present:

"You'll have to excuse her, dear people; an exhibition dancer drew her into the limelight by seeking her to dance with him in public last week, and her head is not quite normal as yet. It's undoubtedly the wild life she leads—actors, dancers—'neverything.' "

At the mention of the word "Actor" Mr. Jack gave a guilty start and dropped his spoon on his plate with quite a clatter. He shot a worried look at me. I could see that he still remembered the dining-room scene of last week and ME with an ACTOR, in a rose-colored atmosphere, surrounded by gaiety and music, and becomingly gowned and hatted and

ear-ringed. My heart leapt within me at the recollection of that wild night.

In the meanwhile Father opened his paper in rather an aimless way. I could see he was still considering the force of my argument, because he seemed rather dazed—at a loss just what to do or how to answer me. Suddenly he riveted his attention to the paper, read something with eyebrows puckered, then cleared his throat to attract the attention of everyone present.

"Ahem! Here's an interesting little item about that dancing man—the relative of Mr. Wright's to whom we were introduced the other evening at the Lodge Banquet. He's the one that asked Janet to dance the exhibition waltz with him. Remember?"

He looked around the table. Everyone nodded or blinked their remembrance, so, satisfied that his audience was with him, he read aloud:

"Guess the Girl behind the Veil and win $10.

"Mr. Barnes, the celebrated ballroom dancer from New York City (whose wife was formerly Miss Ada Jones of this city and who is at present confined at her home by illness), will appear every evening this week at the ORPHEUM THEATRE with a NEW DANCING PARTNER who will wear a Veil.

"Guess the name of the Girl behind the Veil and win $10 in GOLD.

"The LADY BEHIND THE VEIL is a SOCIETY GIRL—a member of the younger social set of this city. She is exceptionally well known—a very popular young lady—a clever dancer—in all, one of the most beautiful and talented girls of this city.

"Guess her name and win $10."

Father stopped reading and glanced silently around the table, and Silence greeted him in reply.

Finally mother said, very unpleasantly:

"How disgusting. No well-bred girl

would think of doing such a thing—she's probably some WILD YOUNG PERSON suffering under the delusion that such notoriety will attract the attention of Society—as the paper terms it."

Then suddenly sister May clapped her hands on the table and leaned forward excitedly.

"Mother," she almost gasped, "that accounts for Mr. Barnes 'phoning here last week for Janet, under an assumed name. I'll bet anything in the world he wanted to ask Janet to do this dancing stunt with him. He called three times. Remember?"

Again everybody remembered.

Mother scowled rather terribly and said very severely:

"It is probable that Mr. Barnes is the sort of a gentleman that would do such a thing—however, we must give him the benefit of the doubt. I thought very well of him when Mr. Wright introduced him to us the other evening—he had such nice teeth."

Then she looked straight at me and said with a sigh of relief:

"Well, it's a good thing that I answered the 'phone instead of Janet, although I sincerely trust she would have had common sense enough to refuse such a ridiculous offer, had it been made to her."

Then I saw Mr. Jack. He was looking at me with his mouth open—his eyebrows were puckered together in doubt and perplexity. Something told me that he was recalling the Drug Store incident. I knew there was a picture in his mind of me in a telephone booth—distracted—WILD (me, not the booth, of course).

You see, I have attracted his attention. How? In his eyes I am WILD apparently. Just how wild, he is wondering, and I will keep him wondering. Like Cleopatra, I have dared to live, perhaps. Of what would I have amounted to in his eyes, had I sat quietly at home with my hands folded? I would have been as attractive to him as roller skates to Aunt Priss.

VIII

THE PAINTED LADY—HER OWN STORY

Wednesday Morning.

It is the one ambition of my life—except, of course, my ambition to be able, sometime, to write ONE THEME that will get by the English Class without criticism—but as I started to say, it is the one ambition of my life to become a great Actress (one of International Fame), and I am bending every effort to ascertain the Psychological Secret of such a success. It is my theory, that if one could incorporate the Mesmeric Properties of a Hindoo Conjurer into the science of acting, one could hypnotize an audience and make them suffer all the agonies and emotions of the Actress herself.

My thoughts were running along these

channels last evening at the supper-table, when suddenly an inspiration came to me.

"Mother," I asked, without considering the depth of my casual question, "have you any face paint in the house? I have decided to become an Actress and I believe I'll begin studying the art of 'make-up,' at once."

I remember distinctly that I was toying with my spoon at the time and had my head resting in the palm of the other hand, with my elbows on the table, and the frosty silence that greeted my remark caused me to raise my eyes and look about me. What a shock I received! Everyone was staring at me again in that dumbfounded manner that seems to have become the fashion in our household of late. Not a hand moved—even Peter stopped eating.

"Well! For goodness sake!" mother finally managed to gasp.

Then father took a hand.

"Look here, young lady!" he said to me in his most impressive tone of voice, "if I ever catch you painting your face, I'll—I'll—"

I knew he wanted to use the word "spank" but somehow didn't feel it was quite threatening enough, so he hastily seized a glass of water, tried to drink, but choked instead. Finally he collected himself sufficiently to finish his remark.

"I'll take you in hand—consider this a fair warning."

Then he turned to mother and sister—very confident of himself now—and hurled the same warning in their direction.

"If I ever find any of you using face paint in this house, I'll take you all in hand. Powder's bad enough—I've stood for that, too much of that in fact, but we'll have no 'Painted Ladies' in this house."

"Too much Powder in your life, eh, Dad?" It was from the family wit, of course. "What kind? Face, Gun, or Bug?"

Then Aunt Priss started in on me, in the usual roundabout manner.

"For goodneth thake, Lizzie," she said primly to mother, "where ith that thild'th table mannerth? When I wath a girl it wath con-

thidered the height of impropriety to thit with one'th elbowth upon the table."

"Janet! Take your elbows from the table," said mother crossly.

I obeyed with a sigh. Everyone, it seemed, was picking on me. Sister May was next. She said impatiently to mother and to the others generally speaking:

"Oh! what do you encourage her for by paying any attention to her whatsoever? She's merely trying to show off before company, and the more you encourage her, the more ridiculous she overdoes this 'being wild' stunt."

Then, suddenly aware of the fact that her temper was showing, she turned to Mr. Jack with a smile.

"She's trying to impress you with her untamed spirit, Mr. Jack. Aren't you fully aware of what a wild woman she is by now. Why, she even stays out at night, every night, almost as bad and wild as the poor cat—come 'Kitty,' 'Kitty,' keep away from 'Toots' she is a bad example for you—"

And she finished hurling her edict at me

with a shrug of her shoulders and a rippling laugh—the one that shows her teeth to the best advantage—she has many ways of laughing, you know, one with the mouth closed to show the dimples and another with the mouth open to bring the teeth in view.

Then Mr. Jack spoke, with attempted lightness, but my ears alone perhaps caught the worried tone in his voice.

"Was she away from home, last night—with you?" he asked.

"Oh! dear, no, not with me. She leads much too strenuous a life for me. She was out until ten o'clock again last evening—at a friend's home 'cramming for exams,' so *she* says."

The conversation was growing much too personal for me by this time, so I pushed back my chair and said, rising with dignity:

"Whenever I speak at this table, it seems to be the signal for this family to reach for their hammers and start tuning for the Anvil Chorus."

And I swept majestically from the room.

Bill started beating time with his spoon on

his glass and singing "Clank, Clank Clank," and May mimicked his actions. Even Peter joined in with his knife and fork against his plate, out of tempo, of course, but adding to the general din and clamor that marked my exit, but I retained my composure and passed from view triumphantly.

In leaving the house last evening, I deemed it a good plan to steal quietly away considering the fact had been mentioned that I had been going out every night, like the cat. The statement might have had an effect on Dad if recalled to his mind by my departure again last night, especially since this made the third night out for me in succession. Mother had given her consent earlier in the day for me to study with Mary Jones at her home again, our home being rather a noisy place for one to try concentration therein. There is always a crowd of Bill's or May's friends dropping in of an evening. Sister May delights in torturing the piano, and Bill is trying to make himself believe that he can sing and so coax up nerve

to try for the Glee Club next year. I am the one that suffers.

So, in leaving for Mary Jones' home last evening, I waited for my opportunity on the stair-landing, and when the family finally drifted into the library, I made my way quickly out by the side door. I thought I had gotten away unobserved, but it took a moment to close the door quietly behind me, and in that one moment I heard the front door open easily and some one cross the front porch rather hastily. Instantly I dropped to my knees behind a convenient lilac bush. Then I saw a strange thing.

A taxi was just leaving the curb in front of the house next door, and I saw Mr. Jack rush madly down the walk and try to peer into the machine, but the blinds were down and it spun quickly away, while Mr. Jack stood watching it go in rather a crestfallen attitude. As he returned aimlessly to the house, I could see he was deeply engrossed with his meditations.

Now, I wonder if he believes I was in that machine? If so, where could he suspect me

of going in a closed taxi? To the Orpheum? I wonder. To the theatre to don paint and powder for a triumphal entrance in a glowing spotlight, encircled in the arms of another man? I wonder. What would he think of me as a Painted Lady? I wonder. I wonder.

IX

STRATEGY VERSUS TRAGEDY —THE PRICE SHE PAID

Thursday evening.

This theme being written under compulsion as a punishment for having deserted the English Class-party which attended "Macbeth" last evening, I will endeavor to explain in these pages why I was forced to abandon the Tragedy for an evening of Strategy. Moreover, as I must submit this theme in addition to tomorrow's regular theme and so am forced to write "on the jump" as it were, I will trust in the lenience of our most worthy instructress in excusing the shortness of this essay.

A taxi is waiting outside for me—two doors down the street—and each whirl of the engine is taking its toll from my slender purse. I have just finished the evening meal and I was

forced to desert my dessert in order to find time in which to meet the demand of this added affliction.

As much as I would have enjoyed the Tragedy last evening at the theatre with my worthy classmates, I would not have sacrificed my opportunity to make Strategy serve my ends as I did.

I started for the Tragedy in good faith with Mary Jones. Directly after supper she 'phoned that her mother would allow her to use the Electric for us to go to the theatre in. When Mary Jones called on the 'phone, I heard Mr. Jack open the door of his bedroom very carefully, and I knew he was listening to my conversation. For some reason, of late Mr. Jack watches or listens for every move I make, so for his benefit I answered Mary's call with the following words, in a tremulous, low voice.

"Why do you insist on coming for me yourself, dear? Wouldn't it be much wiser to send a taxi again tonight?"

To which Mary answered sarcastically:

"Say, who do you think is talking to you—

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a man with money? This is Mary Jones speaking."

I replied in a hushed voice:

"Well, dear, if you *must* come for me in your own car, be sure and pull down the curtains in the machine, so if any of the family are watching, no one will recognize you."

By this time I was aware that Mr. Jack had tiptoed out into the hall above, and my heart almost fluttered through the confining limits of my young body. And by this time Mary seemed to understand the double meaning in my words, for she whispered in a voice full of thrilling longing:

"Is he listening again, Toots? Are you trying to make him think you are talking to another man? Is he crazy with jealousy? I'll be over immediately in the Electric; maybe he'll follow—and I'll pull the curtains down so he won't know who his hated rival is. And say, Janet, maybe mother'll let me use the gasoline car instead of the 'lectric—then won't we lead him a merry chase. I'll be there in a minute, dearie."

To which I replied, oh! so sweetly:

"I'll count the minutes as hours until you arrive, dear heart."

And so Mary came whirring up to the house in her mother's car, and I ran hastily out the side door and jumped into its dark interior—she had drawn the blinds, true to her word. As I stepped into the car, I saw Mr. Jack come hurrying out of the house.

We slid quietly but swiftly away into the night.

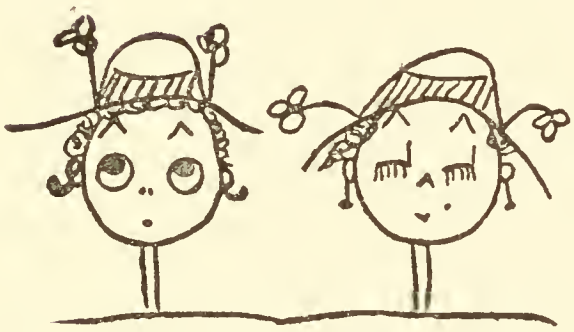
Later in the evening, as we were driving along, we saw Mr. Jack come hurriedly out of the Orpheum Theatre and pausing by the alleyway leading to the stage door, he stationed himself in the shadow of a near-by doorway. The show was not over as yet, but evidently he had seen all the vaudeville he cared for, for that evening. We were just turning into the street leading to the theatre entrance and his back was turned toward us, so we drove hastily around the block, then up the alley from the other street, past the stage

door of the Orpheum and out into the street again past the doorway where he was hiding. At any rate we gave him the satisfaction of seeing me near the stage door of the Orpheum, and that was evidently what he was looking for.

So we arrived at the Tragedy too late to learn much about Macbeth, and this theme is a penance for the sin, and a waiting taxi will extract the price I must pay for avoiding Tragedy through Strategy—but such is life.

X
"THE SCHEMER" AND HER REWARD

Friday morning.



Will she? She will!

This being almost a continuation of last evening's episode, I shall relate my adventure in the taxi as a fitting conclusion to the theme written under the eye of the taxi, so to speak.

I shall have to refer to the conversation at the supper-table last night to make my story complete.

It was a stormy meal for me, full of complex situations that required a great deal of

scheming on my part in order to be able to meet the emergencies. I was late getting home, and supper had been announced before I arrived, so upon entering the dining-room, I found the family waiting for me with their hands full of Trouble—all wrapped up in bundles and ready to hurl at my unsuspecting head.

First mother said frigidly, without any prelude or clearing of throat, by which she always wins in a standing start over Dad when it comes to taking a person by surprise and catching one unaware—without time to think up an alibi, as it were:

"Janet," she said coolly, "where did you go with Mary Jones last evening?"

"Why!" I said in surprise, while I grappled for time to collect my wits and post my advance pickets on the outlook for the Trouble brewing, "I went to the theatre to see Macbeth with a class-party."

"My, does Macbeth associate with class-parties," said the family wit at once, for which I was thankful, having purposely worded the

sentence so it would give him an opening for a pun and so give me a moment's more time. "Must be a new version of Shakespeare," he giggled, to his enjoyment and my advantage.

I said crushingly—trying to start an argument and so divert mother's thoughts:

"Perhaps I'd better modify my statements to the accepted form as understood by children, generally speaking."

I had another perfectly good two-hundred word sentence on the tip of my tongue, but mother was not to be "talked out of court" so to speak.

"Janet," she said severely, "confine your statements to answering my questions, truthfully. Miss Branson, your English Instructress, just telephoned, stating you did not arrive at the theatre until the curtain was almost down on the last act. Why were you so late in reaching the theatre?"

It was sister May that came to my rescue this time. She said, sarcastically:

"Oh! our child would be nothing if not fash-

ionable you know. Perhaps a tardy arrival is quite the thing in her set at present."

But mother persisted.

"She left here in ample time to have reached the theatre a half an hour before the curtain ascended, and she arrived fifteen minutes before the final curtain. (This was in the nature of an explanation to Dad.) Now, Miss, tell us where you were."

"We had a puncture," I managed to gasp.

"Who's we?"

"Mary Jones and I."

"Whose car were you in?"

"Her mother's."

"Which one?"

"Has she more than one mother?"

"Don't be silly. Which car?"

And suddenly I guessed the Electric must have solid rubber tires, or why all this cross-questioning.

"The Limousine," I replied.

"I thought you told me this morning that you came home last evening with Mary Jones in the Electric."

This sally brought forth a snicker and a giggle from among those present—there must be a flicker of old Roman blood somewhere in our family tree, as nothing seems to please them more than to witness the persecution of an innocent, helpless victim.

"Yes," I replied quite haughtily, "I told you this morning that I came home last evening with Mary Jones in the Electric. Have I told you anything to the contrary since?"

"You just said you were in the Limousine."

"We were."

"For goodness' sake! A second ago it was the Electric!"

"It was both."

"Now don't try to be silly. I'm going to get at the truth of this affair, even though Mrs. Jones and I have to call in a detective. Father, it's time you demanded a complete explanation."

"Father does not have to demand an explanation—I am eager to give one. We left in the Electric—"

"And had a puncture?"

"Not in the Electric."

"Oh!"

"As soon as I started to get into the Electric, I noticed the tail-light was not burning, so we went to the garage where the Joneses keep their cars, and the garage man told us it would be an hour or more before a mechanic would return who could fix the lamp; so we took Mrs. Jones' Limousine—the gasoline car—and started for the theatre again. Then we had *the* puncture."

"What time was it when you left the garage in the Limousine?"

"About eight o'clock."

"What did you do when you found the puncture?"

"We took the car back to the garage."

"How far were you from the garage?"

"Almost to the theatre. We drove back very slowly on account of the flat tire."

"What time was it when you got back to the garage?"

"About eight-thirty. And we waited for a man to change the tires."

"From eight-thirty until ten-thirty, I presume."

This was from sister May—she couldn't keep out of the battle any longer for fear mother might overlook some salient detail that might prove my undoing.

"Certainly not!" I replied with dignity. "We waited from eight-thirty until about nine, then we started for the theatre again."

"And took an hour and a half to ride ten blocks?"

This was from Bill. The whole family were gradually entering the fray now.

"Certainly not," I answered patiently. "We were at the theatre shortly after nine."

"You're about an hour and a half short in your calculations, sis. Better confess up to a joy ride and take your medicine," giggled Bill.

"That will do, William, this is no laughing matter," said mother. Then to me again. "Miss Branson distinctly mentioned the fact that it was ten-thirty before you appeared, and as this performance of Macbeth was part of

the English Course, she felt it her duty to punish you by asking you to do some additional work at home this evening. I trust you are not trying to tell me anything untruthful, Janet, to escape a justly deserved punishment for playing truant, because your failure to attend that performance of Macbeth, when it was part of the school's educational program, was a deliberate act of truancy."

"Mother," I replied with the air of a martyr, "I am not trying to shirk the punishment, even though I am innocent, and if you will excuse me now, I'll hurry to my room to fulfill my obligation to the school that Miss Branson has seen fit to add to my burdens. And in answer to your last question, let me ask, have I ever been untruthful?"

"You mean—have you ever been caught?" giggled sister May.

But I gave her no heed, because I was anxious to escape to my sanctuary and from the eyes of the family for that one evening, as I had many, many plans to carry out, and the

less interested they were in me the better. I had ordered the taxi to come a little earlier than I should have done and the hour was approaching on wings, so I pushed back my chair to depart, when Father took a hand in the matter.

"Keep your seat, Janet, I have a few questions to ask yet—I want to know exactly how you spent every minute of the time from nine o'clock until ten-thirty last evening."

"Well," said I settling back in my seat with a sigh and helping myself to a glass of water, "when we parked the car and crossed to the theatre, Mary suddenly found she had been sitting in some grease somewhere, and her dress was quite ruined. So we went back to her house—"

"And went to bed to rest up a bit before tackling the job of starting for the theatre again, I suppose."

This was from Bill again.

"Certainly not," I replied sarcastically, "I said Mary sat in the grease, not I. Had I

done so, I would have had to have gone to bed, it is true, but Mary has more than one dress in her wardrobe."

"Oh, the matter is quite clear now, little one, we all understand—you had your wardrobe on. Continue the tale."

"Well, as soon as Mary got into another dress, Mrs. Jones told us to go back to the garage and get the Electric, as she was afraid to let Mary drive the Limousine; so we went back to the garage again—"

"Ye Gods!" exclaimed Bill, wildly, "and this is the simple little tale of two young ladies trying to go to a theatre. Well! well! what happened next?—I suppose then, in your excitement, one of you drank gasoline instead of water and had to run to the doctor's so as not to waste the gasoline, and—and—oh, my! if you keep on at this rate, you'll arrive at the theatre day after tomorrow night. Go on, little one, tell us more, tell us more, this suspense is maddening."

"That is all there is to tell, after that we went to the theatre to see Macbeth."

Then sister May started whistling "Fairy Tales," and Bill inquired sarcastically:

"Have WE a little fairy in our home?"

Then I said indifferently:

"You may substantiate my statement if you will take the trouble of calling Mrs. Jones on the 'phone."

"May I be excused, Father?"

Father seemed willing, so I hurried to my room without eating my dessert, in order to write the essay—the taxi was due in fifteen minutes.

Then my reward.

All the time I was writing that extra theme with the taxi buzzing away under my window, so to speak, Mr. Jack was making plans of his own as you will see later.

Having finished the essay and having borrowed the new dancing frock that sister May had all packed away in tissue-paper for the Junior-Senior reception—to which she is going with Mr. Jack—also her "million-dollar" coat, her new hat, and the ear-rings, I slipped

quietly down the stairs to the side door and out into the night. There was no one in sight, and I thought for the moment that Mr. Jack had lost interest in my comings and goings.

I fled to the taxi, waiting for me two doors down the street in front of an empty house, and I hurriedly climbed aboard. My arms were full of borrowed clothes, and for a moment the taxi-driver scrutinized me carefully, then said with a wink:

"Leaving your job in a hurry, eh? What ya quittin' for?"

And I realized he mistook me for a lady's maid running away with her mistress' clothes. I replied with freezing dignity:

"Does your company pay you for entertaining its patrons or for driving the car. Your conversation is costing me a great deal of money. Kindly drive on."

And I gave him the address of Mary Jones' home.

Properly rebuked, he slammed in the clutch,

and we started with such a lurch that it almost snapped my head from my shoulders.

At Mary's home there was another delay, with the waiting taxi eating up my precious dollars and cents, while Mary assisted me into the borrowed finery. I rouged my cheeks, penciled my brows, powdered my cheeks and throat luxuriantly, carmined my lips and hung the long black ear-rings in my ears, then put on the hat and the coat, and was ready—for what?

Mrs. Jones was not at home, having gone to a dinner-party that father and mother were not asked to grace with their presence, so we went boldly out Jones' front door. No one saw us go, not even the servants.

We hurried out to the chugging taxi, and when the driver saw me this time, his eyes nearly popped out of his head in amazement. The Jones live on a corner, and there is a street lamp in front of their house. I suppose the poor man was quite overcome by my "made-up" beauty, for he did nothing but gape at me

—and the taxi still feeding on my money—until I gave our destination as the Orpheum, then he fairly jumped with surprise.

"Oh! Now I getya—you're the Lady behind the Veil! Gee! you're tha dancin' kid all right—I saw you last Tuesday."

"Hurry!" I commanded frigidly again. "Time is money in this matter."

And again we almost jumped out of our tires, so to speak, getting started. And as we whirled down the street, I saw another car, that had been apparently waiting for us around the corner, leap to its feet and start after us. Then, as it whirled under the street light, both Mary and I recognized Mr. Jack at the wheel.

Oh, be calm, my fluttering heart! It thrills me yet, as I recall what followed.

All I could do at the time was to sink helplessly into Mary's arms. We were being pursued.

Then Mary took a hand in the matter. She reached for the speaking tube and whistled the driver's attention.

"Quick!" she said in a commanding voice. "Don't slow down! There is a man in a car behind trying to follow us. He must not know where we are going. If *you* can't get any speed out of this old chariot, I'll come out there and drive. Turn up the next street to the park and don't be afraid to step on her! We can't go to Orpheum until we ditch that car following us, and we haven't a moment to lose."

"Nor a dime to spare." I thought to myself, as I knelt on the seat and watched the pursuing car through the rear window.

We went like mad—swerving and swaying like a ship at sea. I was terribly shaken up but I managed to cling to the seat and watch the car behind. Slowly Mr. Jack gained upon us. Then, just as we entered the park driveway, a policeman ran out into the street waving his arms for us to stop. But we heeded him not, neither did our pursuer. Then, as we whirled into the shadows of the park, I saw a motorcycle join in the chase, jumping suddenly out

from under the blackness near the park gateway.

On we flew. The road began to wind, and Mr. Jack began to cut the curves in a hair-raising manner, and he was almost upon us, us, when—FLASH—FLASH—I saw two streaks of fire rip the darkness behind his car, then he and the car went crashing headlong into the shrubbery beside the road. I screamed with terror, and our car suddenly turned a sharp corner and swerved down a branching roadway. Mary and I were thrown into a heap in one corner, and by the time I regained the rear window, Mr. Jack and the motorcycle had completely disappeared. Our driver had suddenly turned out all our lights and slackened our pace until the motor was running noiselessly. We turned another sharp curve, and I saw we were following a hilly, winding, gravel road. Then suddenly I realized our driver's strategy—we had turned off of the main driveway into the bridle path. And with our lights still out, we crept out of the park through the entrance to the riding

path. Once in the street again, our lights were switched on and we started back for town at a lawful speed.

But my heart was crowded with dread. What had happened to Mr. Jack? And I beseeched the driver to turn back into the park, but he shook his head and continued stubbornly for the Orpheum Theatre.

We were soon there. Then, to my surprise, instead of driving up to the curb in front of the main entrance, we turned sharply down the alleyway and drew up in front of the stage entrance. The driver jumped out, threw the door open for us to alight, and said rather familiarly:

"Say, I've done you a favor in ditchin' that guy, now be square with me and whisper your name so's I can win a Ten-spot in the guessin' contest. Come on, tell me your name, be a good little sport."

Then I saw Bill.

He was watching the whole performance, just beyond the shadow of the stage door. I choked a slight scream of dismay in my hand-

kerchief, and the taxi-driver turned around to see what had startled me.

And then he saw Bill.

And when Bill saw we were all looking at him, he suddenly walked over to the machine and jumping inside, he called out our home address very curtly to the driver and slammed the taxi-door shut in the man's staring face. A second later, with the usual lurch, we started for home.

Then I wept.

The excitement had proven too much for me and Mary clasped me tightly in her arms while we rolled silently homeward.

At home, Bill paid the taxi-driver after a sarcastic argument with the fellow—Bill remarking from the size of the bill against me, that we evidently had been touring the United States and France. But finally he paid for the taxi, and we started for the house like a silent funeral procession. Mary never offered to desert me, and I clung to her as to the last straw.

We entered the house, and as we passed into

the hall despair seized me. Bill was leading me toward the library, where the family, was gathered, but suddenly tearing my arm from Bill's grasp, I rushed madly up the stairs into my sanctuary and into my bed, where I buried myself under the bedclothes—dancing gown, plush coat, new hat, ear-rings, and all. Then I gave myself up completely to my woe.

A moment later the whole family burst in upon me—all in one bunch I judged from the noise they were making, all talking at once. The next instant the bedclothes were dragged away and there I lay—exposed to the world.

A stifled scream from sister May was the first thing to catch my attention above the general hubbub.

"My new hat! My ear-rings! My cloak!" Then the cloak was pulled aside with another scream of anger. "My new gown!"

I had ceased to care by that time what might happen next. I buried my head deeper in the pillows and sobbed afresh. After a while I was aware of Bill speaking in a high, excited voice that I scarcely recognized.

"I met her getting out of the taxi in front of the stage door."

"What made you look for her at the stage door?"

It was Dad's voice and it was terrible in its sternness.

Bill went on, almost babbling in his hurry;

"Jack called me out on the front porch after supper and pointed to a taxi waiting down the street. He told me it was waiting for Janet —to take her to the Orpheum. He explained that Janet was doing that dancing stunt at the Orpheum as "The Girl behind the Veil," that he had seen her do the dance, and later had met her coming out of the alley leading to the stage door with Mary Jones in the Electric. That's why they were so late to the class-party the other evening. You've let her out of the house every night this week on some excuse or another, and instead of going over to Mary Jones' to study for examinations, the two of them have been slipping away to the theatre, where Janet does the dancing stunt. The act

is over by nine-thirty, so they've managed to get home by ten o'clock."

Then I heard Mary burst out angrily:

"Why! Willie Lee! You great big STORY-TELLER! We never went to the theatre! NOT ONCE! We were going tonight, but you stopped us."

"And you went to the stage door, I notice," said Bill in disgust.

But mother interrupted.

"Tell me, Mary, where did you and Janet go last night?"

"To the theatre to see Macbeth, but we got there late because the Electric was out of order and the Limousine had a puncture and I sat in some grease and had to go back home and change my dress and—"

"But how did Mr. Jack happen to see you coming out of the alleyway to the stage door?"

"Well, after I got my dress changed, Mother refused to let me drive the Limousine so we had to go back to the garage for the Electric, then on the way from the garage to the Broadway

Theatre we had to pass by the Orpheum, and just as we turned the corner into that street, we saw Mr. Jack come out of the theatre door and hide in a doorway by the alley where he could watch the stage door, so just for fun we drove around the block and down the alley past the theatre so Mr. Jack would think we were coming from the stage door."

"But why did you want Mr. Jack to think you were coming from the stage door?"

"Because he thinks Janet's been dancing there this week."

"What made him think that, I wonder?"

"I don't know, unless he saw her going over to my house to study every night."

"Did she study with you every night?"

"Yes, mam, if you don't believe me, 'phone to mother. We studied for Algebra exams, History exams—"

"That's all right, I believe you," said mother more hopefully.

Then Bill spoke up again.

"There's a nigger in the wood-pile, somewhere. Miss Branson the English Instruc-

tress, 'phoned me this morning at the University and said she was greatly worried over Janet, because she had cause to believe that Janet was deceiving us about studying with Mary every night—that she felt she ought to warn me to look after her a little more closely, especially at night, but not to worry you all if I was certain Janet was going to the Jones' home. So I talked this matter over with Jack on the porch tonight, just before we saw her skip out the side door to the taxi with her arms full of clothes, and Jack said that he was convinced she was doing the dancing act because he was with her when she talked the matter over with that dancing man."

"My goodness!" exclaimed mother, "why didn't he tell me something about this long ago?"

"Well he wasn't exactly with her and didn't hear it all himself, but he took her to the Drug Store where she called up that dancing fellow —you see Jack answered the 'phone one time last week when that dancer called and asked

for Janet, and Jack felt sorry for her because we'd all been picking on her, and he made her promise to call the dancing guy up and tell him she did not want to have anything to do with him, and that he must stop calling the house as he was getting her in dutch with the folks. He took her to the Drug Store so she could talk with the guy and then she double-crossed him and made the date instead."

"Oh! Willie Lee, you're the very biggest story-teller in the whole entire world." It was Mary coming to my rescue again. "Janet never called up that dancer, not even once; she called me and told me how Mr. Jack was watching her outside the booth and how she was acting wild to keep him guessing."

Then said sister May very sarcastically:

"See, I've told you all along she was only acting up before the poor man to make him think she is wild. Goodness! What must he think of this family?"

Then father took a hand rather gruffly.

"Keep still, May, or go to your room. Tell

me, Mary, why did you an Janet get out at the stage door this evening?"

"Well, Janet and I wanted to see if we knew who the 'Girl behind the Veil' was and win ten dollars, so we bought box seats for to-night's show—here are the seats yet and all wasted now. We had to sneak away because it was a school night and mother and you all object to us going out on school nights. And Janet wanted to look as nice as the girl on the stage in case Mr. Barnes should see her in the box; and because you are so stingy about giving her any clothes, and as none of my dresses would fit her because I'm so fat and not nice and slender like she is, well, she borrowed May's gown and cloak and hat and earrings and we went to the theatre in a taxi, and the driver made a mistake and thought we were actresses and let us out at the stage door."

"Why do you think the driver thought you were actresses, Mary?" Father's voice was more kindly now.

"Well—because we were all painted up I suppose," Mary answered stubbornly.

And with that Dad came over to me and pulled the plush coat away from my face and looked at me for a long time in silence. Then he said to mother:

"Bring me a mirror.""

And then, after a minute or so, he reached under my chin with his finger and forced me to lift my head, then he commanded very severely:

"Look at yourself, young lady."

And I looked—it was awful. I was all smeared up with rouge, and the black lines under my eyes were running down my cheeks, and the red from my lips was running down my chin, but what did that matter, I was heart-broken. I looked up into Father's eyes and tried to speak, but I felt as though I was choking to death.

"Dad, daddie, you can punish for ever and ever for the face paint and the stolen clothes, but first find—find Jack."

And my throat swelled up so horribly at

the thought of those awful flashes of fire that ripped the black night behind Jack's car and sent him whirling over and over into the bushes, that I thought I should die for a moment or two.

"Bill," said Father, "where's Jack? Did he go to the theatre with you?"

"Jack had a machine ready to follow the taxi in case he was mistaken about her going to the theatre, and he sent me to watch the stage door while he kept the taxi in view."

"Where is Jack?" asked Father, sitting down on the bed beside me and taking me in his arms. "Tell me, Janet, where is Jack?"

Then my heart broke completely and I gasped wildly:

"He's dead! dead! dead!"

And everybody gasped aloud with alarm.

"What's wrong, honey? Tell Dad what has happened so he can find Jack."

"Jack was killed," I sobbed and sobbed. "He tried to overtake us in a car in the park, and we were going like the wind, oh! so terribly fast, and someone on a motor-cycle shot

at him and he turned over and over in the bushes."

"Well! well!" exclaimed Dad in alarm. "Quick, William, call a taxi and we'll go to the park at once."

Then the 'phone rang.

It sounded like a death-knell in my ears. Everybody stood speechless for a moment, thinking the same horrible thought that sprang into my mind, I suppose.

"The undertaker!"

I held my breath in agony while Bill went downstairs to answer the call. A moment later he came bounding up the stairs shouting with joy.

"He ain't dead! He ain't dead! He's only in jail!"

"IN JAIL!" we all exclaimed at once, musical-comedy fashion.

"They pinched him for speeding again, and he wants Dad to go his bail."

"Call a taxi, William," said Dad.

Then sister May started to cry.

"Oh, how terrible! In jail!" she sobbed,

and mother hastened to comfort her. I was quite forgotten.

"Oh, don't worry, sis," said Bill. "Jack's accustomed to being in jail by this time. Whenever he goes out in his motor, the cops have to shoot his tires full of holes to stop him."

"Oh! has *he* got a car?" asked sister May, suddenly drying her tears.

"Has *he* got a car?" echoed Bill with disdain. "Huh! He's got three of them."

"But no one ever told me—" she began but Bill went on unheeding.

"No. We never told anyone. I asked him not to say much about the cars 'cause Dad doesn't seem to like the idea of having a car around for fear I'll drive the wheels off, I suppose—besides Jack's the fastest roller that ever hit this burg and he's been in jail so often for speeding that I knew none of you would love him the more if you got his real number, so I've kept kind a quiet about him and his cars. He's an orphan you know. His aunt's name is Dora Day—old maid—own mines and everything—you've heard of HER and Jack's

her only heir—going to have millions and millions some day. Their home's in the East. He came out here a week before the Frat house burned down. He never intended to go to school here until I introduced him to this family, and Dad asked him here to live, and now for some reason or other he likes the town and wants to stick around. Maybe Janet's wild enough to amuse him—he's some sport himself, you know."

Well, I was completely forgotten after that. Mother just told me to wash my face, and she kissed me rather absent-mindedly, and left the room with sister May to discuss this new information they had received about our guest. Even the plush coat and the new gown were forgotten. Bill took Mary home, and Dad went to rescue Jack from jail. So I was left alone to disrobe and bathe at my leisure, and after a while I crept into bed.

I must have slept for some time, for I was suddenly awakened by someone bending over

my bed. It was Dad. He sat down beside me and cuddled me in his arms.

After a while he said very softly:

"I'm glad my little girl doesn't tell stories—and anytime she wants a new dress, all she has to do is ask Dad—I guess he knows who's his friend in this family. He's been neglecting his pals of late—but I guess we won't have to dress for breakfast, dinner, and supper, and all other occasions however slight, just to wear out the hand-me-downs of the entire family."

And after a time I whispered in his ear.

"And I guess I don't want to be a 'Painted Lady,' 'cause paint's so smeary, Dad."

Then he kissed me goodnight, and suddenly I found something round and heavy being pressed into my hand.

"This is for a little party at the Orpheum, for you and Mary—Mary's a good girl, a spunky little rascal; show her a good time. Good night."

And as he tiptoed softly out of the room,

I caught the gleam of golden metal in my fingers from the night-light by the bedside.

This morning—coming down to breakfast—I suddenly saw Bill beckoning to me in a real mysterious manner, just inside the library door. I stopped in amazement—wondering why he was not in the dining-room calling crossly for his coffee, as usual—then, with a finger to his lips, as in warning to be quiet, he beckoned to me again.

I went quietly into the library and there was—Mr. Jack.

Bill leaned over and whispered in my ear—real soft and brotherly-like;

"Here's our old pal back again, all safe and sound, and not dead—dead—dead. See! It's him, not his ghost, and he wants to say something kind of private-like to you."

And Mr. Jack came over to me and said in a bashful sort of way:

"I want to apologize for having doubted you, Janet, and I got what I deserve for trying to spy on you."

Then he turned to Bill and said happily:

"You tell her the rest, old man."

I sank weakly into a chair, and Bill came over to me and sitting on the chair-arm, he said in his old chummy manner:

"Jack's going to become a member of the family soon. Her nibs, the society queen, condescended to accept him for better or worse last evening, so it's up to us to welcome him as a true brother. Give him the glad hand, old scout."

And when I smiled up at Mr. Jack and offered to shake hands, something stiff and crackling was crushed into my palm.

"With brotherly love," he murmured, leaning over and kissing me on the cheek, while his hands forced my fingers to close over the crisp bill. "It's a brother's duty to always be on hand in the time of need. Your sister has accepted me that I may help the family keep you tame, and I hope you will always keep me supplied with a job in this household."

And he tiptoed to the door.

Then Bill, rising to follow, leaned over and took my other hand in his and said softly:

"Sis, old sport, I'm sorry I broke up the fun last night. Here's something for a little party with your friends tonight at the Orpheum. Show your pal, Mary, a good time, and don't stint yourselves on ice-cream, candy, and peanuts; I've got enough left for a bottle of Paregoric for the morning after. Mary's a good scout—a worthy member of our club."

And another something crisp and crackly was crushed into my palm.

Then I was left alone with my tears of love and gratitude.

Ah! Happiness-Supreme!

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